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VEKHI: A PROGRAM OF LATENT REACTION

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "*Vekhi*: A Program of Latent Reaction" submitted by Louis G. Nosko in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

In 1909 a great debate among the Russian intelligentsia was sparked by the appearance of *Vekhi*, a collection of articles on the Russian intelligentsia. The authors of this collection were Peter Struve, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Semen Frank, Mikhail Gershenzon, A. S. Izgoev and B. A. Kistiakovsky. The intellectual reputations of the authors combined with the provocative subject matter ensured *Vekhi* to be a literary success. As a political success *Vekhi* was a disappointment. It aroused the ire of almost all of the radical intelligentsia and in some quarters Vekhism became a catchword for reaction.

The central theme of *Vekhi* was religion, but as Gershenzon said in his introduction to *Vekhi* there were great differences in each author's faith. What was common to them was the " . . . recognition of the theoretical and practical primacy of the spiritual life over the external forms of the community."

Berdyaev criticized the intelligentsia's lack of philosophical training and introspection. In his words they accepted what they found useful in certain philosophies to promote the revolution. Bulgakov contrasted the intelligentsia's ascetic life-style and its ideal of heroism with Christianity. He saw the intelligentsia's revolutionism as

unproductive unless allied with the true spirit of Christianity. Frank portrayed the intelligentsia as torn by a great dualism: nihilism and moralism, one calling for destruction and the other for ethics. Gershenzon warned that a true revolution could only come about when each individual plumbed his own consciousness. Struve blamed the failure of the 1905 revolution on the intelligentsia's anti-state and anti-religion dissociations. Kistiakovsky criticized the intelligentsia for unwillingness to respect law and promote its authority and objective rule in the nation. Izgoev maintained that the life-style of the intelligentsia, based on student cliques and heroic emulation, produced a perverted class, untrained and unknowledgeable, striving for destruction and revolution.

These attacks by *Vekhi* brought forth a host of denunciations, but they did not bring about the hoped for spiritual reformation of the intelligentsia. *Vekhi*, by placing the blame for the reaction on the intelligentsia and not the government, was stigmatized as supporters of the autocracy. Struve's pleas for a strong nation brought denunciations of nationalism. The call for a return to Christianity was in itself enough to lose supporters for *Vekhi*. In all *Vekhi* was disowned and branded as a new version of Official Nationality.

The criticism of *Vekhi* in the years following its publication tended to follow two styles: that of outright denunciation, e.g. Lenin, and that of an attack on *Vekhi*'s

principles tempered by a slight nod to some of *Vekhi*'s criticisms of the intelligentsia, e.g. Milukov. Since the resolution of 1917 Soviet historiography has dealt with *Vekhi* exclusively in the style established by Lenin. On the other hand western and emigre literature has treated *Vekhi* in a most favorable light.

This paper is an attempt to return to the critical position offered by the Kadets in 1910. *Vekhi* is not viewed as an enlightened catechism juxtaposed to Bolshevism, nor as a manifestation of Black Hundredism among the moderate intelligentsia. What is offered is a study of *Vekhi*'s political position. In this manner it is easier to understand the nature of the reaction to *Vekhi*, and not have this clouded by post-1917 emotions and biases.

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CHAPTER I

VEKHI AND THE RUSSIAN RENAISSANCE

In the spring of 1909 Russian society received a shock with the publication of *Vekhi*, a collection of articles by several prominent members of the intelligentsia denouncing that very intelligentsia for what the Vekhists viewed as its harmful radicalism and revolutionism. During the course of 1909 and the first half of 1910, in which *Vekhi* went through five editions, the stunning attack by *Vekhi* brought out into the open some major threats to the intelligentsia by its own ideological framework and revealed some glaring rifts in the intelligentsia fabric. Intelligentsia radicalism was attacked, its idea of service to the people was denigrated, and the most cherished heroes in its pantheon were denounced. All the major figures and groups within the Russian intelligentsia took the opportunity to join in the verbal fray denouncing, supporting or at least acknowledging the position of *Vekhi*. Yet the furor over *Vekhi* quickly subsided. The intelligentsia did not alter its nature because of the admonitions of the *Vekhi* authors. Rather, *Vekhi* had no effect whatsoever. Even Semen Frank, many years later, referred to it primarily as a "succés de scandale".¹ What

¹Semen Frank, *Biografiya P. B. Struve*. The Chekhov

then was the importance of *Vekhi*?

Vekhi is important in itself primarily because of the calibre of the writers and their importance to Russian thought and letters: Peter Struve, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergius Bulgakov, Semen Frank, Mikhail Gershenzon, Alexander S. Izgoev and Bogdan A. Kistiakovsky. Peter Struve was a prominent Marxist ideologue in the 1890's, a leader in the Marxist attacks on the *Narodniki*, the author of the RSDRP manifesto in 1898, the most prominent of the "Legal Marxists", and editor of *Osvobozhdenie* and a highly respected economic historian. Berdyaev was to become famous as a philosopher, as was Frank, an interpreter of Russian Orthodoxy to the West, and a historian of social and philosophical thought in Russia. Bulgakov, as well as Berdyaev, was first famous as a Marxist in the 1890's, but by 1908 converted to Orthodoxy and in 1918 received holy orders. During exile he became in effect the intellectual head of the Russian church in Paris. Gershenzon was an intellectual historian whose researches awakened a great deal of interest in the formation of the Russian intelligentsia and especially Chaadaev and the Slavophiles. A. S. Izgoev (pseudonym of Alexander Solomonovich Lande) was a journalist and a member of the Kadets. Bogdan Aleksandrovich Kistiakovsky was a prominent jurist.²

Publishing House (New York, 1956), p. 83.

²Marshall Shatz and Judith Zimmerman, "Introduction" to *Vekhi* in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, II, no. 2 (Summer, 1968), p. 152.

Vekhi is significant for the content of its essays, it was indicative of a tremendous evolutionary trend in Russian ideas during this period. Russian radical thought of the forty or fifty years prior to the 1905 revolution had been dominated by asceticism and moralism. Asceticism was founded on the devout fervour with which a radical *intelligent* consecrated his life to the triumph of good over evil in Russia. The ideology of the *intelligent*, whether it be populist, nihilist, Marxist or whatever, defined the moral categories which imbued his manners and judgments. The whole of an *intelligent's* life revolved around his idea. As Vladimir Nahirny put it:

The core of their personalities was not so much the content of the ideas and beliefs they embraced or the nature of the collective causes they served . . . as it was the mode of their attachment to and orientation toward them . . . These ideas absorbed the *intelligents* to such an extent, that, like a lover with his beloved, they did not hesitate to play out their whole lives around them . . . bent upon ideologizing every sphere of their relations to people, including even the ties of friendship.³

The disappointment following the revolution of 1905 led to a questioning of the intelligentsia's moral position and the fitness of its role to lead the people. "A crisis of the Russian intelligentsia's orthodoxy had come to a head, and *Vekhi* was a very clear symptom of that crisis; they were regarded as a factor furthering its aggravation and

³"The Russian Intelligentsia: from Men of Ideas to Men of Convictions" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IV, (1961-62), p. 433.

the beginning of a recovering process."⁴ From the intelligentsia's traditional emphasis on the "people" there was a shift toward individualism, from materialism to idealism, and from atheism toward religious belief even a return to Orthodoxy.

The whole tenor of Russian cultural life underwent a marked change. This period, starting in the late 1890's, is usually termed the Russian Renaissance.⁵ Poetry freed itself from the weight of populism and social justice. Philosophy left its materialistic moorings and drifted off in search of man's relationship to the universe, to a supreme being, and to meaning and power in man's own individual life. Ascetism was renounced by increasing numbers of Russian intellectuals who plunged into the sensual and mystical mysteries of life, searching for a creative meaning in either, sometimes in both, *e.g.*, Vassili Rozanov. The moralism of the old radical intelligentsia obviously could not hold true for the new aesthetes in Russian life. Good and evil in terms of material wealth or political power could not signify everything to the men and women of the Russian Renaissance, who could offer the possibility of several different categories defining the meaning behind life. For some it was sex, for

⁴N. O-v., "Piatideciatilitie Vek" in *Mosty*, 3 (1959), p. 289.

⁵Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*. Trans. by R. M. French. Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press (London, 1947), p. 220.

others a god, while others raced around in the belief that frenetic activity was an indication of an approaching Apocalypse.⁶

Individualism, more than anything, was the hallmark of *Vekhi* and the entire Russian Renaissance. It was belief in the primacy and power of the individual which enabled so many intellectuals to search their own souls and define their experiences according to their own freely constructed beliefs that prompted the flowering of aestheticism, religious belief and a new vivaciousness in Russian visual arts and *belles lettres*. But as Georges Florovsky indicates, the birth of new feelings was not without its pains.

The very feeling of life underwent a change . . . And it was not only a spiritual change, it was a new experience . . . in those years, to many, it suddenly came to light that man was a metaphysical creature. Man suddenly found in himself an unexpected, deep and often dark chasm . . . The world now seemed different. Vision became refined. The abyss also came to light in the world . . . Religious needs again were awakened in Russian society, as it had once before in the Alexandrian epoch. This awakening was painful and difficult.⁷

Reorientation of one's thought towards the individualism of the Russian Renaissance brought forth cries of "renegadism" by the advocates of the traditional radical intelligentsia.⁸ The authors of *Vekhi* played a leading role

⁶James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*. Alfred A. Knopf (New York, 1966), p. 504.

⁷*Puti Russkogo Bogosloviya*. YMCA Press (Paris, 1936), p. 452.

⁸*Ibid.*

in the Russian Renaissance. Four of them, Struve, Berdyaev, Bulgakov and Frank, abandoned Marxism and became converts to Christianity.

Furthermore these authors, especially Berdyaev and Bulgakov, became closely connected with the literary and artistic circles of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Religious-Philosophical Society which centered around Dmitri Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius, the "Wednesdays" of Vyacheslav Ivanov, the discussions and meetings at the homes of people like the Princes Trubetskoy, Pavel Florensky, Vassili Rozanov, Andrei Bely, Lev Shestov and others were focused on much broader aspects of Russian cultural life than those aspects which so strongly affected the intelligentsia from the 1860's to the 1890's. As Zinaida Gippius wrote,

Those who were even slightly tainted by the spirit of the sixties were excluded; for the spirit of political radicalism had reigned too long over the mentality of the Russian people.⁹

New journals such as *Novy' Put* and *Voprosy Zhizni* were devoted to philosophical and religious problems that were far removed from the problems of the people's liberation and well-being.

Art and literature dissociated themselves from the social utilitarianism and revolutionism of the past. The Russian Renaissance, that roughly coincided with the reign of Nicholas II, had its cultural diversity mirrored most

⁹ Nicholas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*. Harper and Row (New York and Evanston, 1963), p. 86.

prominently in literature and art. Contacts with Europe and its romantic revival strengthened the movement in Russia. In painting the trend was away from social realism and popular education that had motivated the *Peredvizhnik* group.

Art no longer blushed for being an ornament and a pleasure. The main activity of the *Mir Iskusstva* was not easel-painting but theater and ballet decoration (Bakst, Benois, Korovin) and illustration of the luxurious, classical and even erotic book (Benois, Lansere, Somov).¹⁰

In literature the trend was similar. The poetry of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, the essays of Ruskin, the plays of Ibsen cracked the mold of Russian literature that had been shaped so strongly by populism.¹¹ The first significant indication of a change was Merezhkovsky's essay, *Tolstoy and Dostoevsky*, in 1901, which as Berdyaev states,

. . . attacked the prevalent "social radicalism" in artistic appreciation, broke with literary "enlightenment" in the name of philosophical idealism and aestheticism, and challenged the authority of Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, who still exercised a considerable influence among the intelligentsia.¹²

Essentially those intellectuals who participated in the renaissance, and discovered new values and beliefs, saw the problems and antagonisms in Russian society as a deep polarisation: between an irrational monarchy and a radical

¹⁰Alain Besançon, "The Dissidence of Russian Painting (1860-1922)" in Michael Cherniavsky, ed. *The Structure of Russian History*. Random House (New York, 1970), p. 394.

¹¹Marc Slonim, *Modern Russian Literature: From Chekhov to the Present*. Oxford U. Press (New York, 1953), p. 83.

¹²Nicolas Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*. Trans. by Katharine Lampert. Collier Books (New York, 1962), p. 143.

intelligentsia,¹³ between idealist and materialist thought,¹⁴ and a radical-liberal sector of society patterning development on the model of Europe with an extremely nationalistic conservatism demanding complete support for the existing social and political system.¹⁵

The authors of *Vekhi* saw it as their duty to re-educate society and to reconcile the differences separating the opposing camps, especially the monarchy and the intelligentsia. The failure of *Vekhi* to accomplish that lay in a number of factors: the years in which it appeared and the discussions around it occurred; the manner in which it criticized one of the parties, *i.e.*, the intelligentsia, and by implication supported the other; and the failure to see that the answer they proffered, in effect, returned to an already rejected solution, the Slavophile Utopia.

Vekhi was published in the spring of 1909, two years after Stolypin's dissolution of the Second Duma. After June 3rd, 1907 it was clear that reaction had triumphed in Russia, and that, while several important civil rights had been obtained and at least the voice of democratic opposition

¹³Fedor Stepun, *The Russian Soul and Revolution*. Trans. by Erminie Huntress. Charles Scribner's Sons (New York and London, 1935), p. 49.

¹⁴Helmut Dahm, "The outlook for philosophy and the fate of the Slavophil Utopia" in George Katkov, Erwin Oberländer, Nikolaus Poppe and Georg von Rauch, eds., *Russia Enters the Twentieth Century, 1894-1917*. Temple Smith (London, 1971), p. 254.

¹⁵Robert F. Byrnes, "Russian Conservative Thought before the Revolution" in Theofanis George Stavrou, ed. *Russia Under the Last Tsar*. U. of Minnesota Press (Minneapolis, 1969), p. 46.

remained in the Duma, those elements of society which hated and distrusted the old order had lost the possibility of political change.¹⁶

The question that loomed in all circles after June, 1907, was whose fault was it that the opportunities presented in the revolution had not been realized, especially after the halcyonic "days of liberty" from October to December, 1905. The intelligentsia suffered most of the abuse and blame for the revolution's failure. Government circles accused the intelligentsia of intransigent and obstructionist tactics in refusing to cooperate with them, and of using the Duma as a platform to espouse violence and radical tactics.¹⁷ Labour and peasant groups felt that the intelligentsia had balked at granting them further political and economic liberties.¹⁸

In intelligentsia circles there was schism as well. Left-wing groups condemned the liberals and Octobrists for revealing their true reactionary colors.¹⁹ Conservative groups, as exemplified by V. A. Maklakov, denounced the

¹⁶Lothar Schultz, "Constitutional Law in Russia" in *Russia Enters the Twentieth Century*, p. 51.

¹⁷V. I. Gurko, *Features and Figures of the Past: Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II*. (Stanford, Calif., 1939), p. 510.

¹⁸Maurice Baring, *The Russian People*. Methuen & Co., Ltd. (London, n.d.), p. 298.

¹⁹V. I. Lenin, "Concerning *Vekhi*" in *Collected Works*, v. 13. Foreign Languages Publishing House (Moscow, 1962), p. 119.

Kadets and the Extreme Left for trying to carry on the revolution by panegyrics and demagoguery instead of working constructively within the guidelines achieved, and accustoming Russia to the parliamentary process and rule of law.²⁰ The Kadets were caught directly in the middle of these accusations; they were condemned by the Left for not clearly standing behind the workers and peasants, and by the Right for not condemning the tactics of the Left.

One aspect of *Vekhi's* position was directly related to the intelligentsia's radical stance *vis a vis* the safeguarding of the revolution's gains. However, this was only one aspect of *Vekhi's* criticism of the intelligentsia. Behind the obvious and tragic rift between government and intelligentsia, *Vekhi* saw the fundamental cause lying in the intelligentsia's basic nature of radical materialism and secularism. What *Vekhi* hoped to do was make the Russian intelligentsia see that a strong and moral foundation was necessary on which to build a just and viable society. To this end radicalism was condemned because it purported to see the solution to Russia's ills only in the violent overthrow of the existing regime and the re-distribution of material welfare. Furthermore this trend of thought denied the existence or value of spiritual beliefs and their ultimate jurisdiction in human society. The whole tenor of

²⁰V. A. Maklakov, *The First State Duma: Contemporary Reminiscences*. Trans. by Mary Belkin. Indiana U. Press (Bloomington, Ind., 1964), p. 9.

Vekhi was established in the Foreward to the articles by Gershenzon.

The men who have come together for this common undertaking differ greatly amongst themselves, both on basic questions of "faith" and in their practical preferences; but there are no disagreements on their common undertaking. Their common platform is the recognition of the theoretical and practical primacy of spiritual life over the external forms of community. They mean by this that the inner life, and not the self-sufficient principles of the political sphere is the only solid basis on which a society can be built.²¹

Thus, *Vekhi* affirmed two basic points: the necessity for a religious-metaphysical basis to ideology, and opposition to revolutionary maximalism of the intelligentsia.²²

Vekhi directed its attacks against only one element of Russian society, the intelligentsia. It was this group they felt prohibited further diversification of richness in Russian cultural life and salvation through a unification of all aspects of Russian life in true spirituality. First of all *Vekhi*, in the articles by Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and Gershenzon, spoke to the problem of looking beyond social utilitarianism for truth. This point was *Vekhi*'s most telling criticism of the intelligentsia; that the worth of an idea or belief was not being judged on any inherent philosophical, social or economic truth, but on how well it fitted into the ideological fabric raised against the autocracy.

Russian history created an intelligentsia with a spiritual temper hostile to objectivism and universalism. This

²⁰M. O. Gershenzon, "Foreward" to *Vekhi*. Marshall Shatz and Judith Zimmerman, translators and Editors, in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, op. cit., p. 156.

²¹Frank, op. cit., p. 83.

cast of mind made real love for objective, ecumenical truth and value impossible. The Russian intelligentsia distrusted objective ideas and universal norms on the assumption that they hampered the struggle with autocracy and service to "the people," whose well-being was more important than ecumenical truth and good.²³

That this aspect of *Vekhi*'s criticism had merit is evidenced by the nature of the attacks on *Vekhi*. The replies by most critics of *Vekhi* did not address themselves to the question of religion which was the principal idea of *Vekhi*, and its one unifying thread.²⁴ And the venom with which some writers, notably Lenin, attacked *Vekhi*'s deviation from revolutionism validated *Vekhi*'s criticism. As one writer, Andrei Bely, noted about the furor surrounding *Vekhi*:

In relation to *Vekhi* there is no freedom of opinion; there is the fear of being suspected retrograde; real freedom, like love, does not possess fear; it professes itself openly. We are tired of this ambiguous equivocation as regards "our situation;" if we ourselves do not know how "to create an attitude ourselves," we must re-educate ourselves; we must raise the level of Russian culture; culture and freedom are synonymous . . .²⁵

Essentially *Vekhi* had questioned the entire ideological basis of the intelligentsia and the revolutionary epoch of the previous fifty years. The main assumptions attacked by *Vekhi* were as follows:

²³Nicholas Berdyaev, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth" in *Vekhi*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

²⁴Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia: Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy*. v. II, Trans. by Eden and Cedar Paul. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. and The Macmillan Co. (London and New York, 1919, 4th imp., 1968), p. 439.

²⁵Andrei Bely, "Pravda o russkoi intelligentsii: po povodu sbornika 'Vekh'" in *Vesy*, 5 (May, 1909), p. 68.

- 1) The belief that man and his institutions are the product of their environment and that no improvement can be made in man except through altering the environment.
- 2) The application to philosophy as a criterion not the objective standard of truth or falsity but the applicability of the philosophy to revolutionary purposes.
- 3) The amoralism that holds that standards of right and wrong are purely relative to the environment in which man lives and that there is nothing absolute.
- 4) The indifference to law and personal rights.²⁶

Vekhi postulated that man's inner spirit housed ultimate reality, and that a personal, inner reorientation toward values based on objective and absolute moral principles posed the best path for human social progress on this earth. They deemed that the entire revolutionary spirit of the intelligentsia was wrong. The intelligentsia had misread Russian history and produced in themselves nothing but an anarchic band.²⁷ They distorted European history and consequently distorted the ideas they took from Europe.²⁸ Therefore, because of the intelligentsia's intellectual and moral distortion, they became dissociated from the state through radicalism²⁹ and from the people through atheism.³⁰ The

²⁶Stuart R. Tompkins, *The Russian Intelligentsia: Makers of the Revolutionary State*. U. of Oklahoma Press (Norman, Okla., 1957), p. 222.

²⁷Peter B. Struve, "The Intelligentsia and Revolution" in *Vekhi, Canadian Slavic Studies*, IV, no. 2 (Summer, 1970), p. 184.

²⁸Sergius Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism (Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia)" in *Vekhi, Canadian Slavic Studies*, II, no. 2 (Fall, 1968), p. 298.

²⁹Peter B. Struve, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

³⁰M. O. Gershenzon, "Creative Self-Consciousness" in *Vekhi, Canadian Slavic Studies*, III, no. 1 (Spring, 1969), p. 15.

upshot then was that the intelligentsia was incapable of reaching the people, and in fact the people distrusted them.

In one sense *Vekhi* sounds like other voices of the period, warning the intelligentsia to repent and rejoin the people. However, *Vekhi* has little in common with the clarion calls of Alexander Blok, the dreadful rumblings of Jan Machajski, or the bucolic exhortations of Leo Tolstoy. *Vekhi* is really posing a conservative viewpoint, but it is not a simple and unified one. It is these differences and the paths they offer that we want to examine. *Vekhi* is not proposing a purifying reunification with the "people" as the answer. What *Vekhi* offers is an inner purification first, the finding of truth for oneself within oneself, and to convince the rest of Russia that salvation lies in following their example. But this in turn can become a serious indictment as Lionel Kochan has shown.

By virtue of its emphasis on the primacy of the spiritual, *Vekhi* could not but lead to some form of reconciliation with the *status quo*. It did not release men from allegiance to the official values of official society--it simply left the task in abeyance. The message of *Vekhi* was tantamount to a withdrawal from politics into political passivity. It revealed the same critical one-sidedness as the students and intellectuals it excoriated.³¹

Our task will be to present and evaluate *Vekhi*'s criticisms of the Russian intelligentsia, and to show that by the path they chose they placed themselves in a tremendous

³¹Lionel Kochan, *Russia in Revolution, 1890-1918*. Paladin (London, 1970), p. 156.

dilemma, in a conflict between their "objective" and "absolute" values and the existence of injustice and oppression in the material world.

CHAPTER II

VEKHI AND RUSSIAN INTELLIGENTSIA RADICALISM

Vekhi's criticism of the intelligentsia may be divided into two sections: one, the nature of the intelligentsia's radicalism and its effects on Russian society; and two, the materialistic-secularistic basis of the intelligentsia's ideology. The storm of criticism that surrounded *Vekhi* centered on the intelligentsia's reaction to *Vekhi*'s assertion that it was they who were primarily responsible for the revolution's failure and the nature of the regime's reaction. Thus, the view of the *Vekhi* group was that intelligentsia radicalism, based on the mystique of revolution, of service to the people, and on an utilitarian judgment of values in relation to the ultimate accomplishment of the revolution, was responsible for the disastrous consequences to the revolution after 1905.¹

Two essays in particular, Struve's "The Intelligentsia and Revolution" and Kistiakovsky's "In Defense of Law (The Intelligentsia and Legal Consciousness)," spoke to the political shortcomings of the intelligentsia. Struve castigated the intelligentsia for lacking a sense of "state

¹Leonard Schapiro, "The *Vekhi* Group and the Mystique of Revolution" in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XXXIV (1955), p. 59.

consciousness", for thinking and directing their activity only in terms of a "we" and "they" attitude.² In Struve's view, ". . . the revolution should formally and actually have come to an end with the act of October 17."³ In his eyes the old state, that is an autocratic regime based on severe restriction of individual liberties, had come to an end. The time for making revolution was past, and the time for education of the politically ignorant had arrived. The reason that the intelligentsia could not accomplish this, Struve laid to two factors: its dissociation from the state and its dissociation from religion.⁴

Struve compared the intelligentsia and its role in the 1905 revolution to the national revolt under Minin, Pozharski and Patriarch Hermogen during the Time of Troubles. The earlier revolt he saw as pro-state, not anti-state, directed at the expulsion of the Poles and the restoration of the monarchy. The fortuitous result of this was that there was no period of reaction which followed. Instead it was the anti-state elements, the peasant and Cossacks that suffered the further restriction of their liberties. Conversely, in 1905 the intelligentsia was anti-state, aiming at the expulsion of the monarchy itself. Consequently when the monarchy was firmly in control again a period of reaction

²Frank, p. 75.

³Struve, p. 191.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 187.

set in.⁵ In the first instance the anti-state forces were the uneducated masses, Cossacks and peasants; in the second, the anti-state forces were the uneducated masses, workers and peasants, led by the educated intelligentsia. What Struve saw as unfortunate in the Time of Troubles was that the anti-state elements became a "thievish" rabble, and therefore " . . . intensified their own enserfment and augmented the social power of the 'masters.'"⁶ Social reforms would have to be carried out in concert with state, not against it. Thus in 1905 the failure of the anti-state elements caused the state once again to chastise them, and this time the state struck back by dissolving the Duma and changing the electoral law.⁷ Here is the crux of Struve's blame of the Russian intelligentsia. Had they stopped revolutionizing after October 17, and got down to the job of real politics through educating the public and preparing social reforms with the government, then the reaction after June, 1907 would probably not have happened. Instead as Struve lamented, "Now it will take years to get the country moving again."⁸

Besides its dissociation from the state, which the intelligentsia had inherited from Razin and Pugachev, the intelligentsia also had an atheistic dissociation. That is,

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 184-86.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁸*Ibid.*

the intelligentsia also denied God and all other-worldly abstractions. Therefore the intelligentsia, in Struve's view, had no principle higher than a materialistic one based on empiricism and rationalism.⁹ Without a higher principle that embodied a religious appreciation of man's inner qualities there could be no meaningful revolution. Struve would see this inner religious belief as posing the question of good and evil on a higher plane than environmental class structure. An individualistic regeneration of man's inner moral personality was required. Without this, which the anarchistic or socialistic doctrines of the intelligentsia deny, Struve foresaw no ultimate change in society or the way men behave toward one another.¹⁰

It is interesting to note that it is not the state that Struve felt needed reform, but rather the intelligentsia. In fact Struve maintained that the state had already experienced the needed reform by the Manifesto of October 17. The intelligentsia, on the other hand, retained its dissociation from religion and the state. As long as this aspect of their ideology was maintained they could not be fit to pursue their proper cultural role in Russia, that is, the education and moral uplifting of the uneducated masses of Russia.

Struve, as soon as he returned to Russia after the October Manifesto in 1905, began to sound warnings to the

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

intelligentsia, above all to the Kadets, to see to the immediate needs of safeguarding individual rights. Instead of advocating a position which would promote an increase in revolutionary activity, Struve desired a cooperative attitude between the liberal groups and the monarchy. He feared a continuing revolutionary situation which could lead to the rights of the individual being lost in the maelstrom of revolutionary struggle and subordinated to the over-all pattern of social struggle.¹¹ As early as October, 1905 Struve saw the ideological nihilism and revolutionism of the intelligentsia as the greatest danger to the peaceful evolution of a democratic Russia.¹² When the Kadets under Miliukov set forth their demands for a Kadet ministry to Stolypin, Struve felt that they too had succumbed to the revolutionary mentality and betrayed the true interests of the nation.¹³ By 1907 Struve had moved away from the Kadet liberals, and reached the position he was to put forth in *Vekhi*.

He asserted that the intelligentsia were incapable of leading the Russian people to freedom because they lacked understanding of the preconditions of that freedom: a populace imbued with the ultimate respect for individuality which lay behind the acceptance of compromise, tolerance and rational discussion to be found, at least partially in western societies.¹⁴

Struve saw the intelligentsia as essentially a

¹¹George Putnam, "P. B. Struve's View of the Russian Revolution of 1905" in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XLV, 105 (July, 1967), p. 459.

¹²Frank, p. 48.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁴Putnam, p. 461.

destruction-oriented group. In this they could effectively ally with peasants. Neither group had anything positive to offer Russia, only hatred and warfare with the social and political system. The danger for Russia lay in the intelligentsia's misunderstanding of the masses' instincts.

. . . the radical intelligentsia, with its call to violence, ran the risk of releasing hostility which might engulf the intelligentsia as well as the officials, landowners and factory owners. For this reason they should begin to think in terms of their true interest, the preservation of "culture."¹⁵

The question of culture and its relation to the progress of society Struve and Semen Frank had attempted to answer in late 1905 and their journal *Poliarnaya Zvezda*. In this journal and later in *Vekhi*, Struve tried to effect a reconciliation between the intelligentsia and the need for cultural freedom and progress. Berdyaev, in his later work *The Russian Idea*, had stated that the attitude of the intelligentsia toward culture was one of suspicion because culture was identified with wealth, and had to be called upon to justify itself.¹⁶ Struve felt that it was only through the free development of the personality in creative cultural ideas that society as a whole could progress.¹⁷

The preservation of culture, the free struggle of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 463.

¹⁶ *The Russian Idea*, p. 131.

¹⁷ P. B. Struve and Semen Frank, "Ocherki filosofii kultury" in *Poliarnaya Zvezda*, No. 2 (December 22, 1905), p. 179.

ideas, had to be carried on by the intelligentsia. Its great task was to educate the masses to a basic respect for culture, and this could only be done in a society founded on law and order and respect for every individual's rights.

The illness of the intelligentsia was that it was concerned with revolution, but not with freedom, and unless it freed itself from the hatred and destruction welled up in the masses, and from subordinating moral and cultural education to revolutionary politics, then Russia would be doomed to tragedy.¹⁸

Kistiakovsky's essay was directed primarily at the intelligentsia's lack of respect for law and its effect on their attitude toward individual rights. Kistiakovsky, in his essay, differed most from the other *Vekhi* authors. Struve is closest to him and Gershenzon is the furthest away. Whereas Gershenzon saw the intelligentsia's illness as an excessive preoccupation with politics and revolution, Kistiakovsky felt that the intelligentsia had dwelt too long on abstract moral questions to the detriment of their understanding and respect for legal questions.¹⁹ Kistiakovsky, like Struve, was also calling for a disciplined society, one in which a respect for law and a long-standing, healthy legal tradition would inculcate in its members the lassitude

¹⁸Struve, "The Intelligentsia and Revolution," p. 196.

¹⁹Arthur Levin, "M. O. Gershenzon and *Vekhi*" in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, IV, no. 1 (Spring, 1970), p. 68.

to develop other freedoms.²⁰

What Kistiakovsky saw not only in the intelligentsia, but in the entire history of Russian thought, was a long-held repugnance to law and constitutionalism. The tradition in Russian thought that Russia somehow benefited from the lack of a legal tradition, Kistiakovsky saw as an onerous legacy. What it implied was that whenever a revolutionary struggle would occur within Russia, the overturn of the tsarist regime would necessarily bring forth the ideal society. Therefore, there would be little inclination to work for a slow and steady grounding of legal rights in Russia. Kistiakovsky used leading *intelligents* as examples: Herzen, K. Aksakov, Mikhailovsky and Kavelin. His appraisal of Herzen is particularly revealing about the other *Vekhi* writers. He quotes from Herzen's analysis of Russian legal life, in which Herzen showed a marked disregard for law by all aspects of society. But Herzen goes on: "This is painful and sad for the moment, but there is an immense advantage for the future. In Russia, behind the visible state there is no invisible state, which is only the apotheosis, the transfiguration, of the existing order of things."²¹ In all of this, Herzen, and also the Slavophiles, saw the positive quality of trust among the people, disdaining the need for

²⁰ B. A. Kistiakovsky, "In Defense of Law (The Intelligentsia and Legal Consciousness)" in *Vekhi*, in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

constitutional guarantees.²² Some of the other Vekhists saw this transformation of Herzen, from an admirer of the West (the home of constitutionalism, but also of positivism, atheism and nihilism) to a love of Russia, as a harbinger of the entire intelligentsia's regeneration. His transformation was one from an atheistic thinker to a religious thinker, in other words a spiritual rebirth onto the path of Dostoevsky and Vladimir Soloviev.²³ This, in the main, was what *Vekhi* itself was advocating, a spiritual rebirth of the intelligentsia along the path taken by Herzen. Struve is nearer to Kistiakovsky in preaching a concern for legal freedom and constitutional order, but even he couched it in such a way as to make a religious reorientation of the intelligentsia the top priority.

In conjunction with this belief that Russia, in effect, benefited from the lack of a legal tradition, Kistiakovsky attributed Russia's legal malaise to a radical tradition that viewed with suspicion any attempts at amelioration or compromise. He ascribed this hostile characteristic to the intelligentsia's habit of considering the constitutional state from its social aspect and not its legal aspect. In other words, whether or not the constitution or laws defined and circumscribed the individual's rights, the intelligentsia distrusted it because it had noble or bourgeois

²²*Ibid.*, p. 41.

²³Sergei Bulgakov, "Dushevnyaya drama Gertsena" in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu; sbornik statei (1896-1903)*. (St. Petersburg, 1903), p. 194.

connotations since either of those classes would be the predominant classes in society.²⁴ This is what the intelligentsia had done since Herzen. They looked at the social order of those European countries that had constitutions, and if they were dominated by the nobility (England before 1832 and Prussia) or the middle class (France and England) then the entire political and socio-economic nature of the state was deemed in control by that particular group. Therefore if such a constitution were undertaken in Russia, presumably at the initiative of the nobility or the bourgeoisie, that constitution, by the intelligentsia's definition, would be dominated and manipulated by the class in power.²⁵ But Kistiakovsky tried to show that the social and political order of constitutional states was based on compromise, and that socialist parties in European states were able to use that principle of compromise to promote their aims.

However, this recognition of compromise and development of a legal order and respect for law by the society's inhabitants, spelled out an evolutionary period which could take generations. This was too long for the Russian intelligentsia. The revolution had to be realized soon, and this could only be done through the acquisition of power and mass upheaval. As Schapiro shows, this trend really began with Herzen. In his letters to Turgenev, Herzen developed his idea of the "separate path," by which Russia could avoid the

²⁴Kistiakovsky, p. 44.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 45.

evils of bourgeois capitalism. Turgenev, on the other hand, insisted that there was no easy way for Russia. The long and steady efforts of various social classes in Western Europe to develop freedom and a just legal order, also had to take place in Russia. Hoping for a leap in time due to some mythical virtues of Russian peasants was illusory according to Turgenev.²⁶ In another article on the *Vekhi* group itself, Schapiro traced the effect of the intelligentsia's "mystique" of revolution on compromise between rival political groups up to the February Revolution and the lack of cooperation between the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks.²⁷

Kistiakovsky's accusation of the Russian intelligentsia's failure to understand the importance of a legal order and the need for compromise in a constitutional framework was proved by the intelligentsia's attitude to the newly created Duma. The majority of the intelligentsia viewed the Duma as a platform leading to the ultimate overthrow of the regime, whether it was constitutionalist or autocratic. The Bolsheviks boycotted the first Duma, placing their faith in the revolutionary armed struggle. The Mensheviks participated in the hope of speeding its downfall, and even the

²⁶Leonard Schapiro, "The Pre-Revolutionary Intelligentsia and the Legal Order" in Richard Pipes, ed., *The Russian Intelligentsia*. Columbia U. Press (New York, 1961), pp. 28-29.

²⁷"The *Vekhi* Group and the Mystique of Revolution," p. 69.

Kadets saw their role as that of quickly replacing the Duma with a Constituent Assembly.²⁸

Kistiakovsky feared that this attitude to law and order would undermine the intelligentsia's respect of individual rights. In the long run he feared that by setting up the principle that the will and power of the people must prevail, the respect and safety for individuals and their right to dissent would be sacrificed. To substantiate this fear he quoted from Plekhanov's address to the Social-Democratic Congress at Brussels in 1903.

. . . every democratic principle must be looked at not in the abstract, but in relation to what may be called the fundamental principle of democracy, namely, *salus populi suprema lex*. Translated into the revolutionary's language, this means that the success of the revolution is the highest law. And if the need arose to limit the operation of one or another democratic principle temporarily for the sake of the revolution, it would be criminal to hesitate at such limitation.²⁹

The same rule of thumb applied to the convocation of a duly-elected parliament by the people.

If the people in a burst of revolutionary enthusiasm elected a very good parliament--a species of *chambre introuvable*--then logically we should try to turn it into a long parliament; but if the elections were unsuccessful, we would have to try to dissolve it, not in two years, but, if possible, in two weeks.³⁰

This meant that power in the hands of the people's "true" representatives, the revolutionaries, whether by

²⁸J. L. H. Keep, "Russian Social Democracy and the First State Duma" in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XXXIV (1955-56), p. 194.

²⁹Quoted in Kistiakovsky, p. 47.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 48.

legal means or not, or even without the mandate of the people, possessed the supreme value. For Kistiakovsky this was the ultimate distortion of legal consciousness in Russia.

The dilemma of Russia was not situated only on the shoulders of the intelligentsia. As Kistiakovsky saw it, the government viewed law, the courts and legal process in the same manner as the intelligentsia, that is, as a means of establishing binding rules, not legal consciousness. Laws and courts, for the government as well as the intelligentsia, were a means to establish discipline and to condemn trespassers against the order.³¹ The only way out of the dilemma was for the intelligentsia, to clean its own house, and to concentrate, not only on abstract values, but also on the relative values of a sound legal order in the world around them.³²

The tenor of Struve's and Kistiakovsky's articles were directed at the political radicalism of the intelligentsia and its effects on the nation's political life, primarily during the 1905 revolution. The other essays spoke to the intelligentsia's ideological radicalism, and the effect this had on the intelligentsia itself as well as the consequences for Russian political and social thought. The articles by Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Frank, Gershenzon and Izgoev criticized the intelligentsia's failure to search for a truth that went beyond political radicalism and material

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 58.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 59.

well-being. Whereas Kistiakovsky lamented the intelligentsia's traditional over-concern with abstract values to the detriment of a political and legal consciousness, and Struve felt that, due to the intelligentsia, Russia lacked a national self-consciousness and a state that would ensure the harmonious development of society's various groups and the rights, the other Vekhists were disturbed by what they considered to be the destructive trend in the intelligentsia's spiritual and moral consciousness. This group of *Vekhi* authors stood much closer to the "common" platform postulated by Gershenzon in his Foreward to *Vekhi*, that is, that the inner spiritual life has primacy over the external life of the community.³³ However, they did not ignore political life. Frank stated in his article "The Ethic of Nihilism," that the intelligentsia's spiritual distortions had done great harm to their political activity. Through their ideological distortion of truth, the disintegration of their moral traditions, and the promotion of violence, the intelligentsia had revealed their own unproductiveness and bankruptcy, and destroyed a promising social movement.³⁴

The keynote to each of the articles was the intelligentsia's distortion of truth. By establishing a certain

³³*Op. cit.*

³⁴Semen Frank, "The Ethic of Nihilism (A Characterization of the Intelligentsia's Moral Outlook)" in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, V, no. 3 (Autumn, 1971), p. 327.

goal, the triumph of the revolution in the name of the people, the intelligentsia had subordinated all other aspects of life to the attainment of that goal. In addition to the intelligentsia's utilitarian standard which measured the worth of an idea or an individual, the intelligentsia also created a way of life, Bulgakov's "heroic activism," Frank's "militant monkhood," or Izgoev's "student radicalism," which defined the *intelligent's* moral and political stance whether or not it had previously been subjected to honest, self-imposed, intellectual scrutiny.

Each of the articles spoke to a different area in which intelligentsia radicalism had subordinated "objective truth" to the program of revolutionism. Berdyaev's article "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth" delineated the intelligentsia's attitude to philosophy; Bulgakov's "Heroism and Asceticism (Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia)" traced the intelligentsia's traditional reaction to the religious problem; Frank's "The Ethic of Nihilism (A Characterization of the Intelligentsia's Moral Outlook)" spoke to the dichotomous relationship between morals and nihilism; Gershenzon's "Creative Self-Consciousness" contrasted the lack of inner spiritual development of the intelligentsia with its external social involvement, and Izgoev's "Educated Youth (Notes on Its Life and Sentiments)" painted a harsh picture of Russian student life with its moral decadence, intellectual conformism, and political and social irresponsibility.

The worth and purpose of philosophy is to inspire cultural creation. "For philosophy is an organ of self-consciousness of the human spirit, not an organ of the individual, but one that is communal and transcends the individual."³⁵ What Berdyaev hoped for philosophy was that it could free itself from its bondage to politics and become part of that Russian Renaissance already being manifested in the arts. But in order for this process to come about, a transformation of the intelligentsia's traditional attitude toward philosophy would have to occur. The concept of philosophical truth would have to be autonomous and freed from intelligentsia truth.

The intelligentsia's truth was the truth of the revolution, and as Berdyaev stated, anyone who did not devote himself to this concept was considered a traitor to the cause of the revolution and in league with the autocracy. "A man too deeply engrossed in philosophical question was suspected of indifference to the peasants' and workers' interests."³⁶ The same attitude faced all other aspects of Russian cultural life. The Russian intelligentsia could not admit the autonomous value of any intellectual and creative pursuits. These would have to be catalogued according to the standards of political ideas and political parties.

³⁵Nicholas Berdyaev, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth," p. 173.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 157.

Therefore when philosophical ideas were introduced and evaluated, they were not evaluated from the standpoint of real philosophical reflection, but instead, on whether or not they were harmful to the people's interests.³⁷ Berdyaev maintained that this approach to philosophy had a disastrous effect on the intelligentsia and on philosophy in Russia. In his words the misfortune was that " . . . love for egalitarian justice, for social good, for the welfare of the people, paralyzed love for truth and almost destroyed all interest in truth."³⁸ Despite the fact that the intelligentsia was disdainful of philosophical truth if it conflicted with the people's welfare, Berdyaev alleged that a very harmful, oppressing and demoralizing atmosphere had set in.

Moral cowardice develops; love of truth and boldness of thought die out. The thirst for justice on earth that is rooted in the soul of the Russian intelligentsia, a thirst which fundamentally holy, goes astray. Moral pathos degenerates into monomania. Among the Marxists, "class" explanations of various ideologies and philosophical doctrines turn into a kind of pathological obsession. And this monomania has infected the greater part of our "leftists." The division of philosophy into "proletarian" and "bourgeois," into "left" and "right," the assertion of two truths, one useful and the other harmful--these are symptoms of intellectual, moral and cultural decadence.³⁹

The Russian intelligentsia had been formed by certain historical circumstances in Russia. Interpretations as

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

to the origins of the intelligentsia differed among the *Vekhi* authors, but they did agree on one thing: the intelligentsia, whether it began as a group in 1721, 1790, 1825, or the 1830's and 1840's, had been so shaped by its struggle with the autocracy, that it, in turn, became autocratic in its judgments of those facets of life which they felt did not benefit the struggle against the autocracy. As Berdyaev noted much of the responsibility for the turn of events lay with the autocracy, " . . . which crippled Russian life and fatally goaded the intelligentsia into an exclusive concern with the struggle against political and economic oppression."⁴⁰

The typical view of the intelligentsia was that it aspired to see freedom on all levels in Russia, that, in effect, it worked towards the creation of a new civilization.⁴¹ The definition of the intelligentsia put forth by one writer contrasts dramatically with the criticism offered by Berdyaev. Ivanov-Razumnik saw the intelligentsia as,

. . . ethically--anti-bourgeois, sociologically--non-estate, non-class, yet a definite group characterized by creative new forms and ideals, and their active execution in life in the direction of physical, intellectual, social and personal freedom.⁴²

Berdyaev advocated a critical re-examination by the intelligentsia to see where they had gone wrong from those noble

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Ivanov-Razumnik, *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli*. T. I (St. Petersburg, 1908), p. 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

goals. It is interesting to note that one of the criticisms of *Vekhi* was directed against this call to re-examination.⁴³ Instead of seeing the intelligentsia as creative and freedom-loving, Berdyaev saw the opposite. Every philosophical idea that had come from the West was accepted, not because of its philosophical merits or through a critical examination, but rather, in the way which it fitted the task of overthrowing the autocracy. To take one example from Berdyaev, he pointed out that Marxism was viewed not from the attitude of the objective principle of production or the organization of creative and productive forces, but from the subjective side of distribution, and in Russia the class factors in Marxism came to be completely dominant.⁴⁴ Russian philosophy, which set itself the task of reconciling the differences between European rationalism and religious faith, had no appeal whatsoever to the Russian intelligentsia because there was no way to fit it into the struggle against autocracy.⁴⁵ In the end the peculiar utilitarian philosophy of the Russian intelligentsia, with its denial of free intellectual speculation and curtailment of self-criticism, had, in Berdyaev's eyes, produced something far removed from the noble goals outlined by Ivanov-Razumnik:

⁴³ D. N. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovskii, "Psikhologiya russkoi intelligentsii" in *Intelligentsiya v Rossi: sbornik statei*. Ivan Petrunkevich ed. (St. Petersburg, 1910), p. 218.

⁴⁴ Berdyaev, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Indeed, our intelligentsia cherished *freedom* and professed a philosophy in which there is no place for freedom; it cherished the *personality* and professed a philosophy in which there is no place for the personality; it cherished the *idea of progress* and professed a philosophy in which there is no place for the idea of progress; it cherished the *brotherhood* of man and professed a philosophy in which there is no place for the brotherhood of man; it cherished *justice* and all noble things and professed a philosophy in which there is no place for justice or anything howsoever noble.⁴⁶

Whereas Berdyaev had examined the intelligentsia's attitude toward philosophy and found it intellectually dishonest, Bulgakov reached much the same conclusion regarding their attitude toward religion. The purpose of Bulgakov's essay was to refute the comparison between the radical intelligentsia and the early Christian martyrs. The most that Bulgakov could allow the intelligentsia by way of comparison was that the intelligentsia did possess a religious nature, but that by rejecting Christ for the creed of atheism the intelligentsia had become unbalanced, craving earthly justice, yet craving even more a religious healing. Bulgakov, like Berdyaev, saw in Dostoevsky a true Russian prophet and philosopher. Berdyaev had compared the intelligentsia's use of philosophy to that of the Grand Inquisitor; Bulgakov compared the intelligentsia's abortion of their religious nature to Dostoevsky's *The Devils*.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴⁷ Sergius Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism (Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia)" in *Vekhi* in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, II, no. 3 (Fall, 1968), pp. 291-310; II, no. 4 (Winter, 1968), pp. 447-63, p. 462.

The intelligentsia consisted of two primary characteristics which, in Bulgakov's assessment, negated any comparison with Christianity: atheism and maximalism. With these two characteristics permeating the personality of the *intelligent* in conjunction with the external pressure of state persecution, the intelligentsia was cut off from the community and was devoted to a life of heroic struggle. Bulgakov quite aptly named it " . . . the 'Hannibal's vow' of struggle with the autocracy . . ." ⁴⁸ And the identification of the intelligentsia with persecution and revolution produced an image of an heroic, self-sacrificing group, akin to the Christian martyrs.

A certain otherworldliness, an eschatological dream of the City of God and the future reign of justice (under various socialist pseudonyms), and a striving for the salvation of mankind--if not from sin, then from suffering--are, as we know, the immutable and distinctive peculiarities of the Russian intelligentsia. ⁴⁹

However, the touchstone of the intelligentsia's resemblance to Christianity was in its attitude to religion. The intelligentsia being atheistic, for Bulgakov there could be no comparison to Christianity. By avowing faith in atheism, the consequences to the intelligentsia's psychological make-up were fraught with danger.

The primary danger was the substitution of a new faith for the discarded Christianity. Bulgakov designated this new faith the religion of man-Godhood, which was a religion based on the perfection of man and the inexorable

⁴⁸ Bulgakov, I, p. 294.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

evolution of progress. It becomes possible for man to work out his own destiny.

Denying the existence of Providence and of any pre-eternal plan working itself out in history, man puts himself in place of Providence and sees himself as his own savior. Even a mechanistic, sometimes crudely materialistic conception of the historical process, which reduces it to the play of spontaneous forces (as in economic materialism) and which manifestly contradicts this image of man, does not prevent it from developing; man nonetheless remains the sole rational, conscious agent, his own Providence.⁵⁰

By placing the salvation of mankind in man's own hands, the intelligentsia was able to move to the belief that they, in fact, were the historical agents of progress in Russia.

And again Bulgakov emphasized that the life style of the intelligentsia contributed to the development of this heroic mentality. "Nothing reinforces the mentality of heroism so much as persecution, victimization, reversals of fortune, danger, and even death."⁵¹

The religion of man-Godhood led to self-worship, and self-worship led to heroic maximalism. This meant that the hero, *i.e.*, the *intelligent* could never settle for something limited. There could be no thought of compromise, nor of working amicably with other parties who shared the same or similar goals, but differed on the methods devised to accomplish them. There could be only one hero or one savior, and heroic maximalism partitioned and set at odds the various groups of intelligentsia.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 303-04.

Blinded by the thought of the heroic deed, and oblivious to everything but the realization of the utopian end, the *intelligent* enveloped himself within the dilemma of Ivan Karamazov: "All is permitted" was to determine the course of the intelligentsia's actions. As Bulgakov stated it, the nature of the intelligentsia's reasoning would be:

I am realizing my own ideal, and for its sake I free myself from the bonds of ordinary morality; I give myself the right not only to the property of others, but to their life and death, if this is needed for my idea.⁵³

This very problem Bulgakov had seen manifested in Herzen's philosophical strivings. His spiritual search had brought him to the brink of accepting the "all is permitted" philosophy, when a personal re-evaluation made him realize the dangers of Karamazovism.⁵⁴ The only way to escape from that position was for the intelligentsia to undertake a re-examination of the personality. Without it the intelligentsia can only become more morally and spiritually bankrupt.⁵⁵

Semen Frank's essay, "The Ethic of Nihilism," continued the trend taken by Berdyaev and Bulgakov, that is, the effect of the intelligentsia's beliefs on its spiritual development. Berdyaev described the effect this pattern of thinking and life style had on its overall attitude toward objective truth and intellectual investigation. Bulgakov

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁵⁴"Dushevnyaya drama Gertsena," p. 164.

⁵⁵Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism" I, p. 309.

traced the effect a denial of religion had on its actions and the justifications for them. Frank's purpose was to show how the intelligentsia constructed its code of right and wrong, and on what this code was based.

Frank agreed with Berdyaev and Bulgakov that the intelligentsia did not arrive at its beliefs through a process of careful scrutinization or honest deliberation. Rather, it postulated one mighty symbol that stood for all truth--the welfare of the people. All aspects of life were defined in relation to this goal. As Frank put it: " . . . serving this goal is man's highest and, indeed, sole obligation, and anything beyond it is demonic."⁵⁶

Two traits were combined in the intelligentsia's world-view, nihilism and moralism. Again it is necessary to emphasize the comparison among Frank, Berdyaev and Bulgakov. In each of these essays the theme has been one of pointing out the contradictions in the intelligentsia's beliefs. Each of these men saw the intelligentsia's goals for mankind come into conflict with their ideological framework. We have already seen how Berdyaev and Bulgakov interpreted the effects on the intelligentsia of their bastardization of philosophical and religious values. Frank saw the same thing occurring in the intelligentsia's moral outlook. On the one hand they adopted nihilism which meant

⁵⁶Semen Frank, "The Ethic of Nihilism (A Characterization of the Intelligentsia's Moral Outlook)" in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, V, no. 3 (Fall, 1971), p. 334.

denying any absolute or objective values. Yet on the other hand they professed a moral creed, defining right and wrong, which postulated an absolute value in terms of material well-being and social justice.⁵⁷

In Frank's view the entire mental and moral makeup of the intelligentsia was founded on falsehood and unprincipledness. By ascribing to nihilism the *intelligent* denied any principled valuation or any objective distinction between good and evil. By this doctrine the world floated in irrational chaos, and change was produced through the indiscriminate warring of material forces.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the *intelligent* would firmly believe in the possibility of a perfect society. His moralism enabled him to believe that goodness resided in the world, and that wickedness derived from exploitative members of society. Happiness could be achieved by destroying the exploiters, educating the exploited, and organizing the society to ensure a just distribution of society's products.⁵⁹ Thus, through nihilism, the *intelligent* was able to justify a creed of hatred and destruction, self-aggrandizement and power. And the addition of moralism brought a justification of this hatred and destruction, but in the name of material well-being and the perfect society.

The intelligentsia went on to mold these conflicting

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

positions of nihilism and moralism into an evangelical faith. Frank went on to define the *intelligent* " . . . as a militant monk of the nihilistic religion of earthly well-being."⁶⁰

The characteristics of the intelligentsia were those of a monastic order.

The intelligentsia is like an autonomous state, a separate little world with its own very strict and solid traditions, its own etiquette, mores and customs, almost its own culture. It can be said that nowhere in Russia are there such firmly established traditions, such a definite regulation of life, such categorical judgments of people and situations, and such loyalty to the corporate spirit in this all-Russian spiritual monastery that is the Russian intelligentsia.⁶¹

Besides being a secluded and ascetic order, Frank deemed the intelligentsia to also possess the characteristics of a militant, worldly order akin to the Jesuits of the Counter-Reformation.

But although he is secluded in his monastery, the *intelligent* is not indifferent to the world; on the contrary, he wants to rule the world from his monastery and propagate his faith in it. He is a militant monk, a monk-revolutionary. Thus, the intelligentsia considers its political goal to be less the introduction of some reform that is objectively useful in the worldly sense than the destruction of the enemies of its faith and the forcible conversion of the world.⁶²

The *intelligent* as monk-revolutionary, with his doctrine of revolutionism and antipathy toward opposing beliefs, became devoured by a single attitude--hatred. Hatred for the enemies of the people, hatred of wealth, hatred for

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

aesthetic, religious and cultural ideals formed a binding faith in which destruction was to be the only motivating force.⁶³ Frank's plea to the Russian intelligentsia was for it to free itself of that ethic of hatred and destruction. The entire fabric of Russian life could only become richer if creation, not destruction, were stressed. To accomplish this the Russian intelligentsia would have to be prepared to question its old value, and turn to the task of realizing new ones.

This same task was at the center of Gershenzon's essay, "Creative Self-Consciousness." In Gershenzon's analysis the old values were those of civic activism, which became tyrannical ones to the exclusion of others. These values intercepted Russian youth at a critical juncture in their lives, and transformed them into a homogenous mass with the same uncritically accepted values and goals. Other goals were denounced out of hand, and the intelligentsia's own inner spiritual and personal development was ignored.⁶⁴ Gershenzon saw this lack of spiritual and personal development as the great error of the intelligentsia. By disavowing one's inner consciousness, the *intelligent* ceased to examine for himself the nature of reality, and failed to arrive at a truth that was the product of his own mental

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 343.

⁶⁴M. O. Gershenzon, "Creative Self-Consciousness" in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, III, no. 1 (Spring, 1969), p. 18.

strivings and passion.⁶⁵ The result was an *intelligent* whose sensual personality, or will, was divorced from logical consciousness, and whose actions were not guided by any truth formulated within it. The consciousness withered, and a healthy, creative personality sickened according to Gershenzon.

This disintegration of the personality proved fatal to the intelligentsia in three respects. Internally, it made the *intelligent* a cripple; externally, it tore the intelligentsia from the people; and finally, as a consequence of these two factors, it doomed the intelligentsia to utter impotence in regard to the regime that oppressed it.⁶⁶

The final essay, Izgoev's "On Educated Youth (Notes on Its Life and Sentiments)," attributed the intelligentsia's failure to lead the country during the revolution to its superficial way of life. There is no need to dwell on Izgoev's antiquated opinions concerning sexual proclivities of the Russian intelligentsia. The point that he was trying to make was that the moral fabric of Russia's educated and progressive circles was being sapped. High ideals continued to loom at the top of the intelligentsia's intellectual framework, but the rest of the body was based on superficiality and dishonesty. The only education Russian youth received was within the radical circles formed during the university years. The great tragedy in this situation as seen by Izgoev was that the *intelligent*-student left the

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 8.

university with no real personal awakening, no honest appreciation of scholarship, and no sound basis to his own ideas other than the fact that it was his circle of friends who presented him with them, and which in turn, he would present to others.⁶⁷ The worst effect was on the intelligent's moral character.

The intense, stimulating student life, which gives the appearance of a grandiose civic activity and takes up a great deal of time at the expense of studies, prevents the students from looking into their souls and giving themselves an exact and honest reckoning of their actions and thoughts. And without this there is not and cannot be any moral improvement. But in general moral self-improvement enjoys no credit among the radical youth, who for some reason are convinced that it is a "reactionary invention."⁶⁸

In addition to the adverse effects intelligentsia radicalism had on the intelligentsia itself, the *Vekhi* articles depicted a social and political milieu of destruction and hatred resulting from intelligentsia radicalism. Izgoev presented the intelligentsia's ideology as one of hatred, which promoted among the people a revolutionary fervour that would brook no restraints.⁶⁹ The intelligentsia themselves shouldered no responsibilities for the consequences of this type of exhortation. This theme was universal among the Vekhists: the intelligentsia offered no constructive programs, only the program of destruction and expropriation.

⁶⁷A. S. Izgoev, "On Educated Youth (Notes on Its Life and Sentiments)" in *Canadian Slavic Studies*, III, no. 3 (Fall, 1969), pp. 505-06.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 507.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 510.

However, each article felt that a crisis had arrived for the intelligentsia. The quietism, doubting and accusations in the intelligentsia camp since the assumption to power of Stolypin, had led some of the intelligentsia to question their methods. *Vekhi*, by criticising the ideology of radicalism, had tried to show that the intelligentsia had reached a bankrupt state. They offered a re-interpretation of the intelligentsia's tradition to determine where they had strayed, and their own program for the intelligentsia's adoption with which they could effect a progressive and just Russia.

CHAPTER III

VEKHI, RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY AND REACTION

The predominant tone of *Vekhi* was negative. It purported to show what was wrong with the ideology of the intelligentsia. In the main this consisted of attacking its secularistic and materialistic beliefs, and the utilitarian manipulation of ideas to foster those beliefs. *Vekhi* did not offer a detailed program of ideological alternatives to the traditional world-view of the Russian intelligentsia, nor did a sequel to *Vekhi* appear which might have proposed the needed alternative. Perhaps the reason for this was that there were too many basic disagreements among the *Vekhi* authors themselves as to the method with which to transform the intelligentsia consciousness.¹ Yet, in any case, within the *Vekhi* articles themselves the germs of a positive program were clearly discernible. The one common emphasis throughout was religion, with the exception of Kistiakovsky. However, each article differed on the role religion was to play in transforming the individual and his society. Only one article, Bulgakov's, maintained that a conversion to organized religion was the undisputed path for Russian society to take. The other articles interpreted religious consciousness in

¹Frank, *Biografiya P. B. Struve*, p. 82.

various ways, while at the same time emphasizing other factors that would be constructive for Russian society. For Struve this was to be a politically healthy nation-state. Semen Frank urged the acceptance of cultural freedom based on the expansion of man's artistic and creative capabilities. Gershenzon, the author of the foreward to *Vekhi*, had indicated in that and in his article, "Creative Self-Consciousness," that his hope for Russian society rested on the development of the individual personality. Berdyaev combined some of the features proposed by Frank, Bulgakov and Gershenzon. Like Gershenzon he was a personalist; like Frank he strove for a vibrant culture; and as Bulgakov, he accepted the dogmas of the Church and placed man's relation to God at the center of the meaning of life. Izgoev and Kistiakovsky were further removed from the religious question aroused by the other *Vekhi* authors. Izgoev's concern was with the life-style of the intelligentsia that contributed to their abiding revolutionism and its myopic vision of society and individuals. Kistiakovsky placed his trust in a sound legal order, and the implantation of respect for law in the members of the Russian intelligentsia and all of Russian society.

Man's inner spiritual life was the platform of *Vekhi*. Among Bulgakov, Berdyaev, Frank and Struve this inner spiritual life revolved around the religious question. Bulgakov laid all the troubles in contemporary Russian society at the feet of the religious crisis in the minds of the

Russian intelligentsia. His criticisms of the Russian intelligentsia, as shown in the preceding chapter, were based on this schism in their life. Searching for the future reign of justice, but basing it on nihilism and maximalist means, the intelligentsia distorted their idea of the City of God. Inner personal growth was ignored and the external forms of society became the only criteria worthy of evaluation and support.² Bulgakov purported to show the difference between the true Christian and the true *intelligent* in viewing history and progress.

Christian asceticism perceives the world differently. I shall not dwell on the goal of world development and history as it appears in the atheistic and Christian faiths: in the former, it is the happiness of the latest generations, triumphing on the bones and blood of their forebears, though in their turn no less subject to the inexorable fate of death (not to mention the possibility of natural calamities); in the latter, it is faith in the universal resurrection, a new earth and a new heaven, when "God will be all in all."³

Bulgakov had traced this schism in an earlier essay in the collection *Ot marksizma k idealizmu*. The schism again was one of basing an idea of progress on scientific principles. Soon, in the minds of the believers, these principles no longer are subject to objective scrutiny, but become transcendent and imminent. By raising the idea of progress to the level of a metaphysical system, the concomitant problem of a justification of good followed in its train. If evil was to be explained and good justified, a theodicy

²Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism . . . ," p. 450.

³*Ibid.*

must remain based on God, not on an abstract idea like the economic and social progress of mankind. Without that justification Bulgakov could foresee Karamazovism, that is, "all is permitted."⁴

Furthermore Bulgakov believed that an intelligentsia philosophy which viewed man in socio-economic terms and displaced the idea of God by the idea of progress was incapable of leading the people. Between the intelligentsia and the people it created an estrangement and caused a war of two faiths. Bulgakov's fear was with the effects on the peasants if that traditional faith was lost.

Destruction of the people's age-old religio-moral foundations frees in them the dark forces which have been so numerous in Russian history, deeply poisoned as it was by the evils of Tatar barbarism and the instincts of the nomadic conquerors.⁵

Another fear of Bulgakov's resulting from this war between the intelligentsia and religion was that it drove the Church into the arms of reaction.⁶ The effect on Russia was to set up mutually hostile armed camps.

Everything gets woven together into one historical and psychological tangle: habitual patterns of thought and historical associations of ideas develop, and both their adherents and their opponents begin to see them as intrinsically binding and indissoluble.⁷

⁴Bulgakov, "Osnovniya problemy teorii progressa," in *Ot marksizma k idealizmu; sbornik statei (1896-1903)*. (St. Petersburg, 1903), pp. 141-43.

⁵"Heroism and Asceticism . . . ," p. 459.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 461.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 462.

The first step towards erasing this contradiction in Russian life was for the intelligentsia to begin to heal one of its greatest contradictions, its anti-religious feeling. Bulgakov's admonition of the intelligentsia was for it to listen to the call of Christ in its heart, return to Him, and in this way restore Russia to health.⁸

Berdyaev and Frank, like Bulgakov, looked to a reunion between God and man, (man in this case being the intelligentsia) as the path toward salvation. They differed from Bulgakov in that they were not as dogmatic in their identification with the Orthodox Church. Berdyaev had indeed returned to the Church, and Frank converted from Judaism, but they did not so readily subsume the Church organization into their rediscovered religious belief as did Bulgakov.

All three thinkers were heavily influenced by Vladimir Soloviev. Bulgakov and Frank developed Soloviev's conception of "total-unity," whereby all aspects of life, spiritual, empirical and rational, co-existed without the mutual exclusion of one by another. Though their philosophical systems were more clearly worked out after they left Russia in 1922, nevertheless, their criticisms of the intelligentsia in *Vekhi* were already founded upon the inclusion of the spiritual into life's processes. The principle of "total-unity" was to become the center of Frank's and Bulgakov's philosophies. However, their intent at the time that they wrote their

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 463.

articles in *Vekhi* was not to be purely philosophical or theological, but to convince the intelligentsia to reinstalled Christianity in their lives. Frank called for a Christian humanism. By that he hoped the intelligentsia would keep intact the noble goals of freedom and justice for the people, but do so with the knowledge that there is a higher reality than man and his life on earth. He asked that the intelligentsia return to the traditions of Russia's cultural elite in the thirties and forties when those two aspects were intertwined.⁹ Bulgakov and Berdyaev stressed the same point, that is, that man's sojourn on earth was not to provide himself with material opulence, but to transcend the bounds of material existence and unite spiritually with the Creator.

The point of the articles by Frank, Berdyaev and Bulgakov was that life must have a religious meaning. All criticisms of social and political life were to be shaped then in terms of their religious content. Each of the articles by these three men made it clear that they regarded the problems and failures of the intelligentsia as having stemmed from their denial of religious values. In this mode of criticism they remained very close to Soloviev. Frank and Berdyaev especially adopted Soloviev's appraisal of European history since the Renaissance. Frank, in a series of talks for the BBC, set forth Soloviev's description of this process:

⁹Frank, "The Ethic of Nihilism . . . ," p. 354.

From the time of the Renaissance onwards there has been a struggle between two spiritual forces--faith in God and faith in man. This fatal misunderstanding overshadows the whole tragic history of modern Europe. Faith in the rights of man and the freedom of human spirit, the call for brotherly love which is to secure for man the conditions of life befitting his great dignity--all this becomes the inspiration of the unbelievers, their battle-cry in the struggle against the Christian faith.¹⁰

The way out of this impasse, set forth by these three Vekhists, was for the Russian intelligentsia to join in a new "Christian" renaissance. Thus Russia was to fulfill her role in history which had been a problem in the minds of the Russian intelligentsia since Chaadayev. For Bulgakov this meant healing the division between religion and anti-religion in Russian life:

Alongside the anti-Christ element in the intelligentsia one can sense higher spiritual potentials as well, a new historical flesh waiting to be spiritualized. Its intense search for the City of God, its yearning that God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, is profoundly different from bourgeois culture's desire for solid earthly well-being. The intelligentsia's abnormal maximalism with its practical uselessness is the result of a religious perversion, but it can be overcome by religious healing.¹¹

For Berdyaev love of truth must be the goal of mankind, and love of truth is equated with love of God. Without this definition of truth, man's nature becomes utilitarian and hedonistic:

This falsely directed love of man, it turned out, destroyed love of God, because love for truth, like love for beauty or for any absolute value, is an expression of love for the Deity. This was a false love because it was

¹⁰ Frank, "Vladimir Solovyov," in *The Listener*, XLI (April 28, 1949), p. 710.

¹¹ Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism . . . ," p. 462.

not based on true respect for men as equal and kindred by the One Father. On the other hand, it was compassion and pity for the man of "the people," and on the other it turned into worship of man and worship of the people. Genuine love for men is not love against truth and against God, but in truth and in God; not pity, which denies the dignity of man, but recognition of God's own image in every person.¹²

To continue obeisance towards anti-religious views and to work towards a revolution that would define men only in terms of social and economic productivity, in Frank's view, destroyed belief in objective ideals and the cultural uplifting of men, and reduced them to machinistic objects:

The pure concept of culture that is organically rooted in the consciousness of the educated European is not native or dear to the Russian, and scarcely touches the inner man. The objective inherently valuable development of the external and internal conditions of life, increased material and spiritual productivity, the perfection of the political, social and domestic forms of intercourse, progress in morality, religions, science and art, in a word, the multifarious labor of raising collective existence to an objectively higher level--this vital concept of culture, with its powerful intellectual influence, inspires the European. But again, this concept is based entirely on faith in objective values and on service to them, and we can give a straightforward definition of culture in this sense as *the aggregate of objective values realized in social and historical life*. From this point of view, culture exists not for some good or purpose, but only for itself; cultural creation signifies the improvement of human nature and the embodiment of ideal values in life, and as such it is in itself a superior and self-sufficient object of human activity.¹³

The return to religion satisfied a different need for each of these three men. Bulgakov clearly indicated that his conversion derived from real religious need, believing

¹²Berdyayev, "Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth," p. 163.

¹³Frank, "The Ethic of Nihilism . . . ," p. 336.

also that conversion by the intelligentsia would heal the gulf between them and the people.¹⁴ But how was this return to Christ to come about? Bulgakov could only offer his own example, which sounded so similar to Soloviev's as to be suspect of a case of hero-worship and emulation. He offered intuition and mystical experience. One just had to open his heart and have faith.¹⁵ Berdyaev, as he stated in his autobiography, moved first to socialism, and then to religion to provide himself a justification of good and a way with which to overcome the problem of evil.¹⁶ But Berdyaev's philosophy, which was to become most closely identified with personalism, was of a type to be most suitable for an ego-centric and self-sufficient individual. His later doctrines of personal creativity, Zenkovsky states, were very much due to his romanticism and fear of banality.¹⁷ The tone of Berdyaev's article in *Vekhi* was aristocratic and removed from the turmoil of Russian society. It is not surprising that much of the reaction to *Vekhi* sounded these criticisms. Lenin for example stated: " . . . it is not the 'intelligentsia' that *Vekhi* is attacking. This is only an artificial and misleading manner of expression. The attack is being

¹⁴Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia*, v. II, pp. 438-39, 442.

¹⁵Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance*, pp. 145-48.

¹⁶Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, pp. 113, 172-73.

¹⁷V. V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*. Trans. by George L. Kline. Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd. (London, 1953), v. II, pp. 779-80.

pursued all along the line against democracy, against the democratic world outlook."¹⁸ Lenin went on to denounce *Vekhi* as part of the right wing and in league with the reaction. This statement was not true. The Vekhists were not simple reactionaries, but to speak of a return to religion as a cure for society's ills besmirched *Vekhi* in the minds of the radical intelligentsia with the colourings of Slavophilism, and perhaps a touch of Black Hundredism.¹⁹

Berdyayev's aristocratic tenor was noticeable earlier in his career. At the turn of the century Berdyayev, along with Struve, Bulgakov, Frank and Tugan-Baranovsky, abandoned orthodox Marxism for idealism. Berdyayev still looked for a new society to be realized, but it was no longer to come about through material progress of the working class and the unfolding of an objective historical process. The new society would be realized through the inner moral perfection of each individual, in whom would have to be embodied the transcendent ideal of perfection. In 1901 he still had not clearly defined his transcendent ideal, but it was evident from the path that he was travelling that it would result in theism.²⁰ The new society and its new moral order were to be based upon

¹⁸ V. I. Lenin, "Concerning *Vekhi*," p. 125.

¹⁹ A. I. Novikov, *Leninizm i progressivnie traditsii russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli: istoriko-filosofskii ocherk*. Lenizdat (Leningrad, 1965), pp. 166-67.

²⁰ Arthur P. Mendel, *Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia, Legal Marxism and Legal Populism*. Harvard U. Press (Cambridge, 1961), p. 205.

the perfecting of each individual conscience. To accomplish this required a conscience aware of its individuality and capable of cultural progress. For Berdyaev this meant discarding the working class as the historical bearers of progress, for " . . . only the spiritually developed and perfected soul can be a real soldier of progress, can bring into the life of man the light of truth, goodness and beauty."²¹ The only people around that fulfilled this description were the intelligentsia, traditionally high-minded idealists. They could rise above class pressures and unite behind themselves all of society. Mendel correctly judged Berdyaev to have returned to the traditional world-view of the intelligentsia, that is, to stand in defence of high ideals, to work for the cultural uplifting of the masses, and to relegate to lower value progress in political rights and material standards.²²

From this change around 1901 Berdyaev joined those members of the intelligentsia who had returned to Christianity. The adherents to the "New Religious Consciousness," centering on Dmitri Merezhkovsky, prophesied an apocalyptic future. The majority of the members found their inspiration in Vladimir Soloviev based upon his belief in a coming utopia of "religious sociality."²³ Apocalyptic predictions

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 207.

²²Mendel, p. 211.

²³Zenkovsky, p. 754.

and a sense of the end of history permeated the entire atmosphere of these intellectual circles. Even *Vekhi* possessed a certain colouring of doom, especially in Bulgakov and Gershenzon.

Soloviev's tale of the Antichrist inspired later writers to portray their own vision of the apocalypse. Merzhkovsky, Blok, Bely and Rozanov delved into the gloomy world of apocalypticism.²⁴ Berdyaev and Frank also experienced a sense of the end to history, but it was based on the more positive aspect of Christ, rather than Antichrist. Both looked to a Christian renaissance, and both saw the two hundred years since the Enlightenment as the triumph of secular values to the detriment of man's spiritual powers.²⁵ Frank later wrote of a Christian renaissance that it was to be:

the awakening in the minds of individual men and the consciousness of mankind of the simple and joyous revelation of the value, the reality and the omnipotence of love as a divine power which unites all men and sustains the life of the world.²⁶

The new world that was envisioned by Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Frank would contradict most of the values and goals of their society. First of all their thought was elitist. In *Vekhi* they denounced intellectual pandering to the people;

²⁴ Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, pp. 504-09.

²⁵ Frank, *God With Us*. Trans. by Natalie Duddington. J. Cape (London, 1946), p. 275; Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*. Trans. by Donald Atwater. Sheed & Ward (London, 1933), pp. 41-50.

²⁶ *God With Us*, p. 278.

they rejected the idea that progress was somehow restricted to the development of the peasants or industrial proletariat, and scoffed at the belief that poverty and asceticism bestowed virtue on the beholder. Progress towards a society based on love and true Christian principles was not going to be the work of crude and illiterate peasants. This was going to be the task of individuals capable of wrestling with their inner selves. This would also have to require a certain level of cultural achievement, and as Frank said in his essay, culture required wealth, both material and metaphysical.²⁷ It was not surprising that the reaction to these attitudes were inflammatory and the Vekhists were accused of allying with the landlords and supporting the autocracy and reaction.²⁸

Secondly they rejected active participation in social and political life. The Vekhists resembled many members of the Russian renaissance who retreated into their private intellectual circles. Berdyaev, many years later, was aware of that seclusion and castigated himself and others for it:

The misfortune of the Russian renaissance of the early twentieth century lay in the isolation of its cultural *elite* from the wider social movements of the time--a fact which proved fatal in the light of subsequent developments during the Russian Revolution True, many adherents and spokesmen of the renaissance sympathized with the Revolution (even Rozanov wrote a book

²⁷"The Ethic of Nihilism . . . ," pp. 346-47.

²⁸N. Poltoratskii, "The Vekhi Dispute and the Significance of *Vekhi*," in *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, IX, no. 1 (Spring, 1967), pp. 98-99.

during the events of 1905 full of praise of the revolutionary movement), but they lost a sense of proportion in their concern for the new problems of a philosophical, aesthetic and mystical character, neglected by those who for generations have been engaged in the social struggle.²⁹

At the time, as Poltoratskii states, the *Vekhi* authors were startled by the overwhelmingly negative reaction to their program of spiritual reformation, and surprised to be branded as sympathizers of autocracy and reaction.³⁰ However, the reaction should not have been surprising to them. In the face of the avowed hostility by the Tsar to the political concepts of representative political bodies, and the actual emasculation of the Duma by the Stolypin government, any program calling for less political consciousness and action seemed to be what the Tsar and cabinet were precisely trying to accomplish. Miliukov threw that argument directly at *Vekhi*, opposing early disillusionment with political action, and stressing that what Russia needed was more political experience, not less.³¹ In *Vekhi* itself there was an argument directed against the tendency to overlook practical achievements in law and politics in favor of absolute ideals. This came from Kistiakovsky's essay:

Some see law as a mere ethical minimum, while others consider compulsion, that is, violence, one of its integral elements. If they are correct, there is no reason to

²⁹ *Dream and Reality*, p. 153.

³⁰ Poltoratskii, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³¹ P. N. Miliukov, "Intelligentsia i istoricheskaya traditsiya," in *Intelligentsia v Rossi: sbornik statei*, pp. 180-81.

reproach our intelligentsia for disregarding law. It applied to higher, absolute ideals, and could overlook this secondary value on its way.³²

On the other side, there were representatives of that stratum of Russian society who viewed the spiritual nature of man as containing the true principles with which to reform society, yet they still disagreed with the aims of *Vekhi*. Most notably Leo Tolstoy and Dmitri Merezhkovsky handed down some rebukes to the *Vekhi* authors. Poltoratskii stated that it was an erroneous conception on Tolstoy's part that prevented him from being in agreement with *Vekhi*. Referring to the *Vekhi* group Poltoratskii stated:

They defended the necessity and the value of philosophy and scholarly endeavour (Berdyayev), Orthodox Christianity and the return of the intelligentsia to the Church (Bulgakov), creative individualism (Gershenzon), professional-academic training and constitutional government (Izgoyev), law and legal consciousness (Kistiakovskiy), statesmanship and political responsibility (Struve), culture and wealth in the practical and metaphysical meanings of this word (Frank), whereas Tolstoy rejected philosophy and science, mysticism and the Church, individualism, law, state and politics, culture and wealth.³³

With all these fundamental principles dividing them, it is hard to see how Poltoratskii is justified in saying that Tolstoy and *Vekhi* were really at one.³⁴ Their brands of spirituality were simply too far apart, and Tolstoy was too much of the anarchist to abide some of the institutions that *Vekhi* was willing to tolerate, especially the hierarchies of Church and State.

³² Kistiakovskiy, p. 36.

³³ Poltoratskii, "Lev Tolstoy and *Vekhi*," in *Slavonic and East European Review*, XLIII (June, 1964), p. 346.

Merezhkovsky was not willing to grant the *Vekhi* authors the claim that theirs was a Christian belief. Bulgakov and Berdyaev he granted, may be Orthodox, but the others were not necessarily even Christians much less Orthodox in his opinion.³⁵ Furthermore he took exception to their claim that the personality was the only way to achieve spiritual reformation.

What is the significance of: "the inner life of the personality is the *sole*, creative force"? It is this: it is not Christian. For Christianity maintains that the creative force of the personality is *not* the *sole* force, that the religious frontier of the personality is union, *sobornost*, communality, the Church, as the Holy Sacrament, as the new God-man "I", in which the fullness of each, separate "I" of mankind can only be realized.³⁶

Merezhkovsky also noted that *Vekhi*, by positing certain characteristics with the intelligentsia, implied that the opposite of those characteristics lay with the forces of reaction. *Vekhi* attacked revolution, atheism, destruction and evil, but by not making it absolutely clear that the old order was chiefly responsible for the evils of Russian life, they ended up by posing it as the alternative to these evils:

"Revolution is negation without any affirmation; hatred without any love; destruction without any creation; evil without any good." Bulgakov does not make an inference from here, but the result is clear: if revolution is destruction, hatred and negation, then the reaction--having risen against destruction--is creation; quenching hatred is love; negating negation is affirmation; and finally if revolution is anti-religion, then the reaction

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 347.

³⁵"Sem' smirennikh" in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, T. 15. (Moscow, 1914), p. 74.

is religion, and perhaps conversely, religion is reaction; this conclusion had already been made long ago by the enemies of religion.³⁷

The religious principle advocated by *Vekhi* was done in the name of freedom. A "free search for God" was the slogan of the neo-Christian movement in the pre-war Russian society. The title suggested Vladimir Soloviev and his concept of "free theocracy," which indicated that man must reconcile logic and scientific reasoning with revelation and mystical belief, and prepare the way for the universal triumph of Christianity. However, Soloviev based his views on the mystique of the Godhead and belief in the infallibility of revelation through Church dogma.³⁸ Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Frank, all of whom considered themselves greatly influenced by Soloviev, attempted much the same thing. The spiritual was proclaimed as the true reality, as an objective principle not owing its existence to any subjective process of man. Yet this same "objective" spirituality was to be intuited. At the same time the dogmas of the Church were held to be historical and metaphysical truths, while the further revelation of dogma could be possible through those thinkers or prophets who had attained a spiritual union with the Creator.

The spiritual nature of man was deemed an objective truth. So too was Christ as God-man. However, as one writer noted, to recognize the concept of dogma meant denying

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

³⁸ Masaryk, pp. 246-49, 251, 254.

freedom of belief to those who did not hold with the dogma.³⁹ And *Vekhi*, by crying for a return to faith in God as opposed to faith in positivism, materialism or revolutionism, was ultimately asking the intelligentsia to simply change dogmatic creeds.

There was another spiritual point of view in *Vekhi*. This was Gershenzon's. However, Gershenzon's spiritual concepts were not connected with Christianity, nor with a God that was founded on dogma and revelation. Gershenzon believed that a really meaningful social reformation could come about only when each and every individual had transformed himself. No amount of system-building whether it was based on abstract philosophical and theological theories or secular and materialistic theories could really alter individuals or subscribe to their own personal needs. In 1909, in *Vekhi*, Gershenzon attacked the dominating interest that social and political concerns had in people's lives. The danger in this, he felt, was that it allowed them to ignore the development of their individual consciousness.⁴⁰ After the revolution of 1917, Gershenzon, in his famous correspondence with Viacheslav Ivanov, attacked cultural tradition and all that went with it, philosophy, art, and poetry, for wielding the same stranglehold over the inner consciousness

³⁹ Leonid Sabaneeff, "Religious and Mystical Trends in Russia at the Turn of the Century," in *Russian Review*, XXIV, no. 4 (October, 1965), p. 364.

⁴⁰ "Creative Self-Consciousness," p. 18.

that political thinking did.⁴¹ Gershenzon's argument was the same in both cases. He wished for a simplification of life. As one writer stated, if there was anyone among the *Vekhi* group who should have aroused Tolstoy's sympathies it was Gershenzon.⁴²

Gershenzon saw mankind weighted down with the values of the past, so that these values, which he saw as subjective and ultimately stamped by some human progenitor, had reached the point of being regarded as valuable in themselves and objectively existent. This was most poignantly felt by Gershenzon in his correspondence with Ivanov:

Every objective value originates in one human personality and at first belongs to it alone . . . Later the world draws the flowering value into its humdrum battles. In the world no one needs it in all its fullness. People sense in the value the original force injected into it by its creator and want to utilize that force for their own ends . . . Eventually the commodity becomes a generally recognized value and is crowned queen. A reigning value is cold and cruel; in time, it petrifies completely and becomes a fetish . . . What had been alive and personal, throbbing with the ardent blood of one man, has become an idol demanding the immolation of other values as alive and personal as it itself was when it first saw the light of day.⁴³

Gershenzon's interpretation of mankind followed the lines of simplification in the individual to the corrupting

⁴¹"Correspondence between Two Corners," in Marc Raeff ed., *Russian Intellectual History, an Anthology*. Harcourt, Brace & World (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, 1966), pp. 388, 394.

⁴²Arthur Levin, "M. O. Gershenzon and *Vekhi*," p. 67.

⁴³Gershenzon, *op.cit.*, p. 386.

nature of civilization. In every individual there is an innate, real self. Above the conglomeration of individual selves there sits the Cosmic self as the universal whole. Man's purpose is to find his real self, not to adopt for values and goals certain inherited concepts but find his own, and to bring it into harmony or disharmony with the Cosmos.⁴⁴ Gershenzon's judgment of men then falls into whether he sees them as in harmony or disharmony with the Cosmos. His thinking falls into Rousseauism. In viewing Russia he interpreted the peasants, the *narod*, as in harmony. In touch with the soil, they lived by a religious principle. Just what this religious principle of the soil was, Gershenzon did not define; but a religious principle was the individual's identification with the cosmic and he flatly stated that the *narod* possessed it.⁴⁵ However, the Russian intelligentsia were "A crowd of sick men quarantined in their own country . . . "⁴⁶ The revolution could not succeed because the people hated and distrusted them more than the government. Gershenzon's remarks on this were picked up immediately by *Vekhi*'s critics as an indication of support for the autocracy:

They do not see us as thieves, like their brother the village *kulak*, nor even as plain foreigners, like the Turk or Frenchman. They see our human recognizably

⁴⁴ Georges Florovsky, "Michael Gerschensohn," in *Slavonic and East European Review*, V (1926-27), p. 320.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁴⁶ "Creative Self-Consciousness," p. 14.

Russian features but do not sense a human soul in us, and therefore they hate us passionately, probably with an unconscious mystical terror. They hate us the more profoundly because we are their own. *Such as we are*, we not only cannot dream of merging with the people, but we must fear them more than all of the government's executions, and we must bless this regime which alone with its bayonets and prisons, still protects us from the people's wrath.⁴⁷

To accomplish a true reformation of society, not man's reason, but the irrational mystical principles behind the Cosmos would have to triumph. These were present in each individual. When all of mankind became single organisms attached to the Cosmic principle, then that principle would be realized. This is nothing more than a General Will that Gershenzon established. It was impossible in Gershenzon's thinking for any single individual to reason what the General Will was or logically produce a principle or value that would be universally applicable. By establishing true self-consciousness, each individual would be able to recognize objective goals that would fulfill his own personal needs.⁴⁸

In his study of the nineteenth century Gershenzon felt that the thirties were a period in Russian life when the goal of self-consciousness was best able to be realized. The men of the thirties were concerned not only with man's partial perfection of society, but with a complete transfiguration of all life.⁴⁹ Gershenzon's appraisal of

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

⁴⁹ *Istoriia molodoi Rossii*. Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo (Moscow and Petrograd, 1923), p. 8.

Slavophilism was based on his own psychological interpretation of history. Real man was in the psyche, man's irrational consciousness. To accomplish a radical change in the world, men would have to delve into their inner selves and morally regenerate themselves. He saw the Westernizers as attempting to effect change by manipulating society, while the Slavophiles started with the premise that man was first an organic part of the universe then a member of society.⁵⁰ Gershenzon took from Slavophilism only that which fitted into his interpretation of history and reality. The social problem was a real problem to the Slavophiles, and a problem they were trying to overcome. Furthermore, he ignored the concepts of Orthodoxy and Nation that were central to Slavophile theory.⁵¹

Gershenzon's goal was social quietism. He offered a retreat into one's mind as the only way to achieve change. For the radical intelligentsia to agree with him, they would have had to accept the social and political *status quo*, and his philosophical spirit of irrationalism. Florovsky summed up what Gershenzon wished: "He wants only one kind of freedom, freedom from civilization, the freedom of inactivity, of unreflecting vegetable life."⁵²

⁵⁰Florovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 327; Nicholas V. Riasonovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology*. Harvard (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 208-09.

⁵²Florovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

The remaining three Vekhists (Struve, Izgoev and Kistiakovsky), emphasized more concrete political alternatives for the intelligentsia to undertake. As we have seen Kistiakovsky felt that there had always been an undue emphasis on intellectual and spiritual consciousness to the detriment of legal consciousness. However, if the intelligentsia was to respect law, then that would have to mean respecting the political institutions from which the law had issued. That would have been a bestowal of legal approval and legitimacy on an entire system considered unjust and evil. The Kadets could, and eventually did, accommodate themselves to that program in the Third and Fourth Dumas. The extreme Left could not have done so.

Whereas Kistiakovsky attempted to construct law as an objective standard with which to realize progress and democracy, Struve offered an ideal of national consciousness. A strong, prosperous and democratic state was the goal which Struve wanted Russia to reach. His castigation of the radical intelligentsia and the mass of workers and peasants was based on their uncompromising hostility to the state. Struve did not go so far as to entertain the idea that the autocratic government with its bureaucracy was a state idea that could bring progress to Russia. During the revolution of 1905 he maintained that it was as inimical toward real progress as violent revolution. His disapproval of it was based on his analysis of its inefficiency and exploitative character. To reform it in 1905 Struve insisted upon order.

Without order the government could justify repressive actions and defeat the revolution's gains.⁵³ With order and with consolidation of the revolution's gains the peaceful process of modernizing Russia, advancing toward democracy, and strengthening the state in European affairs could begin.

Struve wanted a moderate and peaceful period of growth. Before 1905, Struve's career had been directed against the primary stumbling block to this--the autocracy. After October, 1905 he turned against the other advocate of extremism, the radical left. Suffice it to say that Struve did not completely abandon any criticism of the government. After Stolypin's death Struve became alarmed at the government's attempts to override the legal order in the Duma, and the bantering about of a counterrevolution in rightist circles.⁵⁴ But the problem he saw here was that the government was destroying the period of tranquility that was needed for progress, and an upheaval would be necessary to shake it out of its lethargy.⁵⁵ What Struve was most worried about was the threat of a complete destruction of the state and the impoverishment of Russia by the tactics of the radical Left.⁵⁶

⁵³Peter B. Struve, "Dve Rossii," in *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, No. 6 (January 19, 1906), pp. 381-82.

⁵⁴Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917" in Michael Cherniavsky, ed. *The Structure of Russian History: Interpretive Essays*. Random House (New York, 1970), p. 365.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Peter B. Struve, "My Contacts with Rodichev" in *Slavonic and East European Review*, XXI (January, 1934), p. 365.

Struve had come to believe in the state as a cornerstone of progress. Under the protection of the state the individual would be free to develop a strong moral character and personal responsibility.⁵⁷ For Struve the state was to be a revolutionary force in national life, and a strong state, not a weak one was required.⁵⁸ For Russia to be a healthy national state the entire fabric of the nation would have to be bound together with a common identity, a devotion to some higher principle. When Struve abandoned Marxism he abandoned the view that a certain class carried the seeds of progress. In the first issue of *Osvobozhdenie* he wrote: "No single class, party or doctrine is exclusively or primarily responsible for the cultural and political liberation of Russia. It is a task . . . for the whole nation."⁵⁹ The idea that would unite the nation was the idea of a "Great Russia." This originally was Stolypin's phrase used as a rejoinder to verbal attacks in the Second Duma. Struve agreed with Stolypin that the country was much more in need of a Great Russia than a Great Revolution.⁶⁰ A Great Russia also meant that Russia was to be identified with her Great Russian population. The reasons for this Struve gave to an

⁵⁷Peter Struve, "Past and Present of Russian Economics" in Paul Miliukov, *et. al. Russian Realities and Problems*. (Cambridge, 1917), pp. 81-82.

⁵⁸A. I. Avrekh, *Stolypin i Tret'ia Duma*. Nauka (Moscow, 1968), p. 32.

⁵⁹Erwin Oböerlander, "The role of the political parties" in George Katkov, *et. al. Russia Enters the Twentieth Century*, p. 69.

⁶⁰Avrekh, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

English audience during the war:

The building up of this enormous State was no matter of chance: it is no chance that in that State there should be a single national nucleus to which the hegemony naturally belongs. It was the consequence of the fact that only as a politically united whole could the land make progress in all respects, and that only a single ethnical element--that which formed the Muscovite State--possessed the political talent required.⁶¹

Struve also maintained that there was to be a higher principle in life than political and economic prosperity. This was to be a spiritual principle, and its strength rested on the religious and moral development of the individual. For Struve this was the true end of mankind, and all aspects of his life, internal and external, were intertwined. Therefore a program of destruction and hatred, along with the supremacy of political over spiritual consciousness, distorted the intelligentsia.⁶² The role of the intelligentsia in Struve's view should be one of education. The intelligentsia should attempt to raise the level of the people's moral consciousness and create a sense of personality. This is exactly what the intelligentsia did not do, Struve said. Instead they furthered the masses' violent instincts.⁶³ Rallying behind a strong and unified State, Struve called upon the intelligentsia to promote the cultural work that they were fitted for and join in elevating the country

⁶¹Struve, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁶²Struve, "The Intelligentsia and Revolution," p. 196.

⁶³*Ibid.*, pp. 194-95.

politically, economically and spiritually to the front rank of the advanced nations.

Struve lamented the fact that Russia had never possessed a bourgeoisie which could have played the role of transmitter of the political and spiritual ideas of the upper classes to the masses. What Russia had lacked was a Reformation that could secularize religion. Comparing Europe to Russia on this matter he said:

The significance of the Reformation and of the Catholic reaction which is so closely connected with it consists in this--that with the help of religion and the Church, principles of a certain social morality and discipline deeply penetrated the soul of the people. The Reformation marks the secularisation of Christian morality, its conversion into a discipline and practice of everyday life--or, if you like to call it so, its "embourgeoisement."⁶⁴

Russia did not experience this "embourgeoisement" and consequently trailed the West in economic and spiritual development. Struve wanted Russia to develop a spirit of capitalism, which he saw as based on moral fitness, individual responsibility, nationalism and constitutionalism.

Struve's program raised strong objections among the rest of the intelligentsia. Miliukov felt that Struve's ideas of state and nationality, combined with the strong religious tone of the rest of *Vekhi*, sounded too much like official Nationality.⁶⁵ Masaryk analysed Struve in the same way:

⁶⁴Peter Struve, "Russia" in *Slavonic and East European Review*, I, no. 1 (June, 1922), p. 36.

⁶⁵Miliukov, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

His identification of state and nationality is extremely characteristic. Struve's ideas are too closely akin to Uvarov's official nationalism, and he is thus led to construct a barrier between the liberals and the socialists. The liberals themselves recognized this, and disowned Struve . . .⁶⁶

The entire program of *Vekhi* was stillborn. Mixing criticism of the intelligentsia with support for religion and the government could not but alienate the intelligentsia from the Vekhists. Certainly the inability of the intelligentsia to separate or acknowledge some of *Vekhi*'s more trenchant criticisms from the themes that sounded reactionary illustrated quite pointedly the soundness of *Vekhi*'s analysis. However, in 1909, the radical intelligentsia were worrying about how to defeat the reaction, not come to terms with it. Pogroms, military executions, legislation by decree and electoral changes were much stronger factors alienating the intelligentsia from the government than appeals by *Vekhi* for spiritual and nationalistic growth which tried to muster support for it.

Furthermore, critics of *Vekhi* were not ready to abandon the view that political and cultural ideas were to be found that were completely free of social or political background. A recent article by a Soviet historian noted the tendency of Western writers to sympathize with *Vekhi*'s philosophical theme, whereas Soviet writers saw *Vekhi* to be as much a political program. "*Vekhi* was also a political tract of the bourgeois intelligentsia that was developing

⁶⁶Masaryk, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

a bourgeois consciousness. The values of nationalism, patriotism, evolution of capitalism, imperialism (by supporting the state in war) were offered by *Vekhi* as the views for Russia's development."⁶⁷

Vekhi also tended to ignore the interests of the masses in their analysis of the revolution of 1905. The conflict was portrayed in terms of intelligentsia versus autocracy. The masses were represented as welling up within themselves a boiling hatred for past grievances and capable of only playing arpolitical roles similar to a *Pugachevshchina*.⁶⁸ Or they were shown to be basically religious-oriented and hostile to the atheistic blandishments of the intelligentsia. The assumption followed then that if the intelligentsia was truly desirous of progress, they would try to understand the religious nature of the people and join them.⁶⁹ This type of approach could certainly not dislodge the intelligentsia from any dangers of "folk-worship." What it did bring were accusations of elitism and a reaffirmation of the bond between religion and autocracy.⁷⁰

⁶⁷G. I. Shchetinina, "Intelligentsia, Revolyutsiya, Samoderzhavie (osveshchenie problemy v amerikanskoj burzhuaznoi istoriografii)" in *Istoriya SSSR*, no. 6 (November-December, 1970), p. 165.

⁶⁸Struve, "The Intelligentsia and Revolution," p. 194; Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism . . . ," pp. 459-60.

⁶⁹Bulgakov, *op. cit.*, pp. 456-58; Gershenzon, "Creative Self-Consciousness," pp. 12-13.

⁷⁰Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 130; Merezhkovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

Vekhi was a testament to Russia's Silver Age, but it was a testament of that section of Russian society which was disillusioned by the arduous road of political achievement. What political alternatives were offered by *Vekhi* were too easily identified with the reaction. By retreating from politics the Vekhists weakened the Russian liberals. Furthermore by maintaining that revolutionism emanated from the Russian intelligentsia, and not from the peasants and workers, *Vekhi* abetted government circles to continue in their thinking that by crushing the intelligentsia the origins of revolutionary sentiment would be removed.⁷¹

Ideas were what *Vekhi* told the Russian intelligentsia to create. Yet the ideas that *Vekhi* offered were neither new nor did they offer any goals that had not already been rejected. On one side was couched neo-Slavophilism: the simple life and peasant values, religion, and the Christian mission of Russia. On the other side was bourgeois capitalism.

As well as a testament to Russia's Silver Age, *Vekhi* was a testament to an age-old problem in Russian life--the lack of a viable conservatism. Whereas opposition to the government was always defined to some degree by revolutionism, support of the government was usually due to reaction to extremist tendencies of the revolutionaries rather than to overt support of the government's programs or policies.

⁷¹George Putnam, "P. B. Struve's Views of the Russian Revolutions," p. 473.

This was the overriding tone of *Vekhi*'s criticism--criticism of the revolutionary's extremism rather than support for the government. Only Struve and Kistiakovsky attempted to offer principles which could be truly conservative, that is maintain a tradition which respected the rights of all the citizens and offer the possibilities of controlled reforms. These were their principles of state and law. However, to entertain any support for the Russian government was tantamount to open support for the Russian bureaucracy, or at least to charges of doing so. This had been the case with Russian conservatives throughout the nineteenth century. Fear of violent revolution made them endeavour to discover a means of social reformism and liberal monarchy. In this respect *Vekhi* was not new. The economists and the Legal Marxists of the 1890's tried to find similar solutions. And among the Legal Marxists Struve, Bulgakov and Berdyaev were very prominent.

This is not to say that any members of the *Vekhi* group believed in or supported the bureaucratic government of the Tsar. Though this usually was the case with the supporters the government picked up from the rival camp. Conservatives of the sixties and seventies, men like Katkov, Ivan Aksakoy and Samarin, spoke out for the Great Reforms, but pulled back sharply in the face of violence and increasing left-wing demands. After the assassination of Alexander II conservative types again became disillusioned with extremism or rejected it altogether. Tikhomirov was the

most prominent example of a revolutionary whose rejection of violence led him into support for the Tsar and eventually part of the bureaucracy himself. Miliukov was correct when he stated that Dostoevsky's *The Devils* was *Vekhi*'s predecessor.⁷² Dostoevsky was indeed a clairvoyant and seer for the Vekhists and for many intellectuals in religious and artistic circles, for a corrupt monarch was judged better than a Peter Verkhovensky or Shigalev.

The Vekhists, as conservatives, were of a far greater stamp intellectually than men like Katkov, Pobedonostsev or Tikhomirov. Certainly there was no comparison between them and the types of people who followed the League of the Russian People or wrote for the reactionary journals such as *Novoe Vremya* and *Grazhdanin*. Nevertheless *Vekhi* indulged in the same dialectical logic that characterized not only the conservative intelligentsia, but the liberal as well. For *Vekhi* atheism was diametrically opposed to theism, pessimism to optimism, progress to revolution, etc. This was the logic of Dostoevsky.

The tragedy of the Russian intelligentsia and its role in Russian society was its ethically-based world-view. On one side or the other, liberal or conservative, individuals, society and political goals were judged ethically and dialectically. *Vekhi* attempted to bring this to the attention of the intelligentsia, but they were unaware that their own philosophies of religion and political passivity were

⁷²Miliukov, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

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